

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BRUSSE 09516 181306Z
ACTION SS-25

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FM AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6600
INFO AMEMBASSY PARIS IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY LONDON IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY KINSHASA IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T BRUSSELS 09516

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: X-GDS-1
TAGS: MOPS, AO, CG, BE
SUBJECT: KOLWEZI OPERATION: BELGIAN CLARIFICATION

REF: A) BRUSSELS 9475, B) STATE 126049

1. WE MET MID-MORNING MAY 18 WITH FOREIGN MINISTER'S
CHEF DU CABINET, ALFRED CAHEN, WHO TOLD US THAT
BELGIAN CABINET WAS IN SESSION SINCE 10:00 A.M. FOR
FINAL REVIEW OF CABINET'S EARLY MORNING DECISION
(REFTEL A) TO PROCEED WITH PLAN TO EVACUATE FOREIGNERS
FROM KOLWEZI. DESCRIBING THIS MEETING AS A FORM
OF FAIL-SAFE DEVICE PRIOR TO PLANNED COMMENCEMENT
OF OPERATIONAL PLAN, CAHEN SAID THAT THE ONLY NEW
DATA WAS THAT FNLA LEADER, GENERAL NATHANIEL BUMBA,
WAS REPORTEDLY ABOUT TO ISSUE A DECLARATION
TO THE EFFECT THAT KATANGAN GENDARMES IN KOLWEZI
WOULD NOT HARM FOREIGN NATIONALS AND THAT INTERESTED
COUNTRIES COULD SEND DELEGATIONS TO KOLWEZI TO
VERIFY THAT FACT. AT THE END OF OUR MEETING CAHEN
TOLD US THAT THE CABINET MEETING STILL HAD NOT
ADJOURNED AND THAT THERE COULD BE SOME SLIPPAGE IN

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THE TIME FOR THE KICKOFF OF THE OPERATIONAL PLAN.

2. FRENCH STATUS - WE ASKED CAHEN FOR A CLARIFICATION
OF THE FRENCH ROLE - IN THE KOLWEZI RESCUE OPERATION
PLANNING, DRAWING ON PARAGRAPH 2, REFTEL A. HE SAID
BELGIANS HAVE BEEN IN CONSTANT CONTACT WITH THE ELYSEE
PALACE AND AS YET FRENCH GOVERNMENT HAS NOT MADE A

FINAL DECISION ON FRENCH ACTION IN SHABA. HE SAID THERE WAS A BASIC PHILOSOPHICAL DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE BELGIAN AND FRENCH VIEW OF A KOLWEZI OPERATION: THE BELGIAN CONCEPT WAS ONE OF A LIMITED, HUMANITARIAN EXERCISE AIMED AT EVACUATING BELGIANS AND OTHER REFUGEES FROM THE COMBAT AREA. FRENCH, ON THE OTHER HAND, SEEMED TO BE THINKING IN TERMS OF A MILITARY ACTION TO RESTORE ORDER IN THE REGION, KEEPING THE FOREIGNERS IN PLACE RATHER THAN EVACUATING THEM. CAHEN STRESSED THAT BELGIANS WANT TO HAVE THE FRENCH INVOLVED IN THE EVACUATION OPERATION (FYI: WE HAVE JUST SEEN PARIS 15761, WHICH APPEARS TO JIBE WITH WHAT CAHEN TOLD US).

3. ZAMBIA - CAHEN CONFIRMED WHAT BELGIAN MILITARY HAD TOLD DEFENSE ATTACHE EARLIER IN THE DAY: THAT, ACCORDING TO THE OPERATIONAL PLANS AS THEY NOW ARE CONSTITUTED, BELGIANS DO NOT ANTICIPATE NECESSITY OF OVERFLIGHT OF ZAMBIA NOR LANDINGS AT LUSAKA OR NDOLA AIRPORTS. HE SAID THAT BELGIAN EMBASSY IN LUSAKA HAD RECEIVED ZAMBIAN FOREIGN MINISTRY APPROVAL IN PRINCIPLE TO POSSIBLE LANDING OF BELGIAN PLANES IN ZAMBIA PROVIDING THAT AIRCRAFT WERE CIVILIAN, NOT MILITARY, AND THAT ALL THE USUAL CLEARANCE PROCEDURES FOR SPECIFIC FLIGHTS WERE FOLLOWED.

4. AWARE THAT ZAMBIAN PRESIDENT KAUNDA IS PRESENTLY
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IN WASHINGTON, CAHEN SAID THAT BELGIUM HAD NOT, REPEAT NOT, INFORMED PRESIDENT KAUNDA OF PLANNED RESCUE OPERATIONS AND ADMITTED THAT THE THOUGHT HAD NOT OCCURRED TO THE BELGIANS TO DO SO.

5. CAHEN CONFIRMED TO US THAT BELGIAN GOVERNMENT ENVISIONED EVACUATING ANY AMERICAN CITIZENS REMAINING IN KOLWEZI AS WELL AS ANY OTHER FOREIGN NATIONALS WANTING TO LEAVE THE AREA OF CONFLICT.

6. CAHEN TOLD US THAT BELGIAN MILITARY ATTACHES IN KINSHASA HAD RECEIVED MAY 17 A 28-PAGE SHOPPING LIST OF MILITARY ARMS, AMMUNITION, AND SUPPLIES FROM GENERAL BABIA. HE SAID THAT ATTACHES ARE IN THE PROCESS OF REVIEWING AND CUTTING THAT LIST WITH THEIR ZAIRIAN COUNTERPARTS AND THAT HE WAS EXPECTING A MUCH SHORTER, MORE REALISTIC LIST TO BE TELEGRAPHED FROM KINSHASA SHORTLY. CHAMBERS

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